



Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation  
Government Center

November 6, 2009

The Honorable Nick Rahall  
Chairman  
House National Resources Committee  
2307 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rahall:

The Tribal Council of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation encourages you to pass the reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA) this year. The IHCIA is included in the House of Representatives' health care reform bill, introduced as HR 3962. Tribes have been trying to pass the IHCIA for 10 years. We, the PBPB Tribal Council, believe the time is now to pass this significant and beneficial legislation, and we thank you for your leadership on this matter.

The IHCIA is the baseline authority for providing direct care to American Indian and Alaska Natives. It sets out the framework for delivery of comprehensive care to approximately 1.9 million Indian people nationwide through the Indian Health Service and the tribally-operated hospitals, health centers and clinics under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act. Reauthorizing the IHCIA will enhance the ability of the federal government to carry out its trust responsibility for Indian health while also improving tribes' ability to provide for their members. Passing the IHCIA will not only reauthorize existing programs, it will improve upon successful programs and also authorize new services using the best advances in medical technology and practice.

Some of the key advancements for Indian health made by the reauthorization of the IHCIA include: (1) establishment of objectives for addressing health disparities of Indians as compared with other Americans; (2) authorization for Indian Health programs to offer modern methods of health care delivery such as home-and community-based care, long-term care, assisted living, and hospice; (3) enhancing the ability of the IHS and tribal health programs to attract, recruit and retain qualified Indian health care professionals; (4) establishment of comprehensive behavioral health programs to address mental health, behavioral health, and substance abuse issues in Indian Country, with a special focus on Indian youth suicide; and (5) reauthorization of and updates for the authority of tribes to bill for and receive Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements for services provided to Indian beneficiaries. The particular provisions on this issue would improve the ability of tribal programs to participate in managed care health plans, and



remove barriers to Indian participation and access to Medicare and Medicaid program benefits.

The Nation operates the Prairie Band Potawatomi Health Center on our reservation which provides comprehensive medical and dental preventative wellness care. The PBPN Health Center provides essential services to our people and contributes to the local health care-related economy by referring patients to other nearby facilities when specialized care is required. The reauthorization of the IHCIA will allow our Health Center to provide improved and expanded services to patients.

Health disparities between Indian people and the rest of America are still vast. We believe that those in Indian Country deserve to receive the same quality of health care as the general United States population. The American health care system, however, has been revolutionized over the past 10 years that the tribes have been pushing for reauthorization of the IHCIA. The Indian health care system lags far behind the American health care system in services and technology.

The PBPN Tribal Council encourages you to pass the IHCIA to bring health care for Indian people into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The time is now. With this, we ask Congress to pass HR 3962, which includes the reauthorization of the IHCIA. This will help the PBPN people receive better health care services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Ortiz", with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Steve Ortiz (Mon-Wah)  
Chairman  
on behalf of the Prairie Band  
Potawatomi Nation Tribal Council